GUIDE TO THE AJ4 WEST TIBETANS FILE

[The AJ4 West Tibetans file is concerned with the Tibetan-speaking peoples of Ladak (in the Indian state of Kashmir) and of Lahul and Spiti (in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh). The land is barren and isolated, with the average monthly temperatures ranging from 23° F. to 62° F., and the altitude of the inhabited areas ranging from 9000 to 14000 feet. The population is mainly agricultural, although in the high plateaus there are large tribes of pastoral nomads. The main feature of the culture, sociologically speaking, is the widespread practice of polyandry.

The West Tibetans file contains 22 sources (numbered 1-2, 5-24), all of them in English except for two translations from the German (5 and 15). The time depth of these sources is considerable, ranging from 1846 for 1: Cunningham to 1951 for the 12: Douglas. There is no really basic source for the file, the closest being 1: Cunningham, which gives a good general coverage as of the late 1840's, 5: Ribbach, which covers the life cycle in a general way, and 13: Heber and Heber which is a rather informal account of the general way of life of the people. The only major sociological accounts are those of Prince Peter (23 and 24), which focus on the practice of polyandry. The other sources are very specific discussions of various aspects of the culture of these groups, or general background studies. Prince Peter is the only anthropologist among the authors, the other being government officials, missionaries, doctors and travelers. Because of the time depth, the difference in local focus, and the relatively low quality of the materials in terms of modern approaches, this file should be used with caution. However, it should be adequate for many purposes. The file was processed between 1955 and 1966.]